WOMEN LEADERS ASSOCIATION
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Women Leaders Association Adds Cindy Mako Robinson as Cleveland Coaching Partner, Bringing a Doctorate in Leadership and a Research Focus on Women in Middle Leadership

The association's Cleveland Coaching Partners roster grows to two — adding an ICF-certified coach whose doctoral research examined the lived experiences of women middle-level leaders, the leaders whose influence is often overlooked

CLEVELAND, October 13, 2026 — The Women Leaders Association, the largest publisher and events organization for women professionals with 43,000 members and more than 130 regional chapters, today announced Cindy Mako Robinson, Ph.D., as the newest Coaching Partner of its Cleveland chapter, ClevelandWomenLeaders.org. The appointment gives the chapter's members a choice of two rigorously vetted coaches with complementary strengths.

Cindy Mako Robinson
Coaching Partner,
Cleveland Chapter

The Coaching Partners program was created to solve a problem the association's members raise constantly: coaching is one of the highest-impact investments a professional woman can make in her career — and one of the hardest to shop for. Coaching titles are unregulated, quality varies enormously, and a leader evaluating coaches on her own has little way to verify who is genuinely proven. Under the program, the Women Leaders Association does much of that screening on the member's behalf. Every Coaching Partner is vetted for recognized certifications, verifiable experience, and excellent client reviews before being presented to members, so each chapter's professionals can book a consultation with confidence, have a great experience, and keep rising in their careers.

Life is a journey, constantly evolving. At times the road is clear — you feel aligned, rooted in purpose, building on your strengths. Other times the path feels uncertain, and you find yourself longing for clarity, direction, or renewed confidence. Robinson built her coaching practice for those second stretches of road.

Her credential for that work is unusual, and it speaks directly to the association's members: Robinson earned her Ph.D. in Leadership and Change from Antioch University with doctoral research into the lived experiences of women middle-level leaders — the leaders whose influence is often overlooked despite their vital role in organizational success. Her research challenges traditional definitions of career success by showing how purpose, values, and meaningful relationships foster leadership growth, fulfillment, and lasting impact for individuals and organizations alike. Few coaches have studied that population formally.

Her clients span career and life transitions: frontline supervisors, emerging leaders, solopreneurs, and individuals navigating a new career or life pivot. She draws on positive psychology and incorporates strengths-based and mindfulness perspectives, and the common thread is helping people gain clarity, recognize their strengths, and navigate meaningful transitions.

She came to coaching after more than two decades in higher education, guiding students, professionals, and families through the moments that shape a career while rising through leadership roles herself. Her 20-plus years of higher education leadership span The University of Akron, Lake Erie College, and Kent State University, leading teams, programs, and initiatives in student success, career development, and organizational change. At Kent State University she directed the College Credit Plus program across two regional campuses and partnered with stakeholders across five counties to expand access to higher education, contributing to a 44 percent increase in new student enrollments. At Lake Erie College she coached first-generation and underrepresented students through academic, career, and personal transitions.

An ICF Associate Certified Coach trained through MentorCoach in positive psychology and executive coaching, Robinson partners with clients through a strengths-based, relational approach. She approaches each client as whole, capable, and inherently resourceful: her role is not to provide answers, but to create a space where a client's story is truly heard, her strengths are recognized and amplified, and her aspirations take tangible shape.

At the heart of her work is a simple belief: growth is not always about becoming someone new. Sometimes it is about seeing more clearly who you already are, what matters most, and where you want to go next.

"My role isn't to provide answers," said Robinson. "It's to create a space where your story is truly heard, your unique strengths are recognized and amplified, and your aspirations take tangible shape. My doctoral research was about women in middle leadership — the ones holding organizations together whose influence too often goes unnamed — and what I found is that purpose, values, and real relationships matter more to lasting success than the traditional scoreboard does. I believe in small, intentional steps that add up to transformation. I'm honored to bring that to the Women Leaders Association's Cleveland members."

Robinson joins Debbi Embry on the Cleveland roster, giving members a choice between two proven coaches with complementary strengths. Members can view Robinson's full profile, including her focus areas and credentials, schedule a 30-minute introductory call through the short form on her site, or send her a private note through the page, at https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org/CoachCindyMakoRobinson

"A great many of our members are exactly who Cindy studied: the middle-level leader whose organization would fall apart without her and whose influence rarely makes the org chart," said Lydia Price, 2026 Volunteer Chair of the Women Leaders Association. "She has a doctorate in that experience and two decades of guiding people through career transitions. With two vetted coaches now in Cleveland, our members can find the right partner for the challenge in front of them."

The Cleveland expansion is part of a national rollout, with the association extending the Coaching Partners program across its network of more than 130 chapters, pairing each city's members with coaches selected for that market.

The Coaching Partners program extends the association's broader mission of giving professional women both the structural transparency and the individual support they need to advance. Research from Pew and others estimates that women still earn roughly 15 percent less than men on average, and most women have little visibility into which employers actually advance women fairly. The Women Leaders Association has invested heavily in closing that information gap: its Glass Ceiling Score project, uses big data to score most major U.S. employers on how fairly they promote women into management and executive roles, and its chapters publish Best Women Employers rankings, compensation studies, and annual Top 50 Women Leaders awards. Coaching Partners adds the complementary, personal dimension: once a member can see the landscape clearly, a proven coach helps her move through it.

About Cindy Mako Robinson

Cindy Mako Robinson, Ph.D., is the founder of CindyMRobinsonCoaching (cindymrobinsoncoaching.com), a leadership and life coaching practice serving professionals navigating career transitions, leadership challenges, and life changes. An Associate Certified Coach through the International Coaching Federation, she completed Level 2 coach training in positive psychology and executive coaching through MentorCoach. She serves on the Board of Directors of ICF Cleveland and presents with the International Leadership Association on relationship leadership and coach as leader. She holds a Ph.D. in Leadership and Change from Antioch University — where her research examined the lived experiences of women middle-level leaders — along with an M.S. in Higher Education and a B.S. in Business Administration from The University of Akron. Her 20-plus years in higher education include leadership roles at The University of Akron, Kent State University, and Lake Erie College. Cleveland members can connect with her through her profile at https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org/CoachCindyMakoRobinson

About the Women Leaders Association

The Women Leaders Association is a non-profit committed to the development and advancement of women in the corporate arena. With 43,000 members and more than 130 chapters in major cities, it is the largest publisher and events organization serving women professionals, producing conferences, leadership programs, original research, and daily publications for its members. We also celebrate the top 50 business women in each city, publish a Glass Ceiling Score ranking how well most employers advance women, and then recognize the best women's employers in each city from these rankings.

Events Near You: https://WomanLeaders.org/r/

Best Employers Near You: https://WomanLeaders.org/r/GlassCeiling

Visit the Cleveland chapter: https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org

Media Contact: Women Leaders Association, Service@WomanLeaders.org, https://WomanLeaders.org

Free Cleveland Women Leaders Resources — available to all women in Northeast Ohio at no charge:

- News: https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org/News
- Top 50 Women: https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org/top-50.html
- Best Women Employers and Glass Ceiling Scores: https://ClevelandWomenLeaders.org/GlassCeiling

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